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Council, and elsewhere, in connection with international affairs. That the official from Upsala knew nothing of Milton is not to be wondered at, for Sweden was then only beginning to be known to the world at large. The latter part of Whitelocke's statement, though naïve, is still harder to understand. He himself boasts throughout his *Journals of the Swedish Embassy* that he speaks Latin as well as English. The only explanation left is that the "high style" for which Milton was employed as Latin Secretary was wanting in the other members of the Council.

Another reference to Milton's blindness which I have not seen quoted before occurs in a "letter of intelligence from the Hague," dated 20 June, 1653—a little over a year after Milton became totally blind. (The letter is also interesting from the point of linguistics.) The portion of interest to us here runs as follows: "Vous aves en Angleterre un aveugle nommé Milton, qui a le renom d'avoir bien escrit. En Hollande ou à Amsterdam nous avons le Sr. Blondel de même devenu aveugle: il est de Paris appellé à Amsterdam sur un salaire de 3600 francs, & devenu aveugle il a neantmoins pu dicter cecy. C'est un homme fort versé es antiquites & vieilles histoires, mais il ne semble que dans les nouvelles il hallucine & manque par fois." (Thurloe, *State Papers*, I, 281.)

On 16 June, 1660, the House of Commons ordered a royal proclamation for the calling in and burning of John Goodwin's *Obstructors of Justice* and Milton's *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio contra Claudii (alias Salmasii)*, etc., and for the apprehension of the two offenders. The proclamation was duly published two months later (13 Aug.) in newspapers and placards (cf. *Mercurius Publicus*, Aug. 9-16, 1660). Masson faithfully recorded this proclamation (*Milton*, VI, 181, 182) but not its sequel. This appeared in the *Parliamentary Intelligencer* for Sept. 3-10, 1660, and is as follows:

"This week (according to a former Proclamation) several Copies of those infamous Books made by *John Goodwin*, and *John Milton*, in justification of the horrid murder of

our late glorious Sovereign King CHARLES the First, were solemnly burn'd at the *Sessions-house* in the *Old Bayly*, by the hand of the Common Hangman."

If the following biography is not the shortest on record, it is certainly one of the most interesting. It was written just twelve years after Milton's death by Winstanley, an old royalist, in his *Lives of the most famous English Poets from William the Conqueror to these Present Times*: "John Milton was one, whose natural parts might deservedly give him a place amongst the principal of our English Poets, having written two Heroick Poems and a Tragedy; namely, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regain'd*, and *Samson Agonista*. But his Fame is gone out like a Candle in a Snuff, and his Memory will always stink, which might have ever lived in honourable Repute, had not he been a notorious Traytor and most impiously and villainously bely'd that blessed Martyr King Charles the First."

WATSON NICHOLSON.

London, England.

English Literature, Medieval, by W. P. KER.
New York, Henry Holt and Company; London, Williams and Norgate, 1912.

Each new handbook dealing with Medieval English Literature is eagerly welcomed, for the impetus given during the past few years to the study of this subject has resulted in the overthrow of many old misconceptions. Professor Ker's reputation as an authority in this field gives assurance that his volume will be free from any sort of inaccuracy, and will keenly enunciate appreciations individual yet not aggressively opinionated. Issued for the Home University Library, the book is written in a style of easy, casual, meditative comment, well suited to the purpose of this series, which is to interest and allure the general reader; yet there is no dearth of interest for the specialist. The book has nine chapters arranged as

follows: Introduction, The Anglo-Saxon period, The Middle English Period, The Romances, Songs and Ballads, Comic Poetry, Allegory, Sermons and Histories in Verse and Prose, Chaucer. A very brief *Note on Books* and a good *Index* are included.

The possible service to the college student of such a volume is the question which concerns teachers who are searching for a compact handbook. This one will not supersede Professor Schofield's *English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer*, nor Professor Snell's *The Age of Chaucer*, for it lacks their orderly and precise statement. For the professed student Mr. Ker's book is merely supplementary, and regarded in this way it has undoubted value as stimulus. It is rich in suggestion, it presents ideas vividly, showing an intense thoughtfulness. The first four chapters are admirably full of keenly imaginative criticism, for here Professor Ker makes very clear the formative influences, the genesis, of early literature, and he discusses brilliantly the growth and the interrelations of these works which combine both French and English traits.

The author's intention is to give inspiration to an incipient student rather than to instruct him in the dry details of dates and biography and in the subject-matter of important works. With an informality rather disturbing to the plodding reader, Professor Ker flies lightly from one poem to another, giving sometimes a full report of the subject-matter, source, form, and style, as in the case of *Sir Orfeo*, to which five pages are devoted, while *Guy of Warwick* is disposed of in a dozen lines, which tell us nothing about the outline of the story. Undoubtedly all of us who love the clear, brief, beauty of *Sir Orfeo* would prefer this, but does it give a right impression, to the general reader, of the relative popularity, influence, and even length of the two romances?

Omissions there must of course be in such a short treatise, and Professor Ker has chosen to omit all account of the miracle plays of the period, which fact is quite in keeping with his general tendency to consider the courtly products at the expense of the more popular. Nothing is said about the macaronic poetry of

the medieval student, and the treatment of the religious lyric seems singularly inadequate when one remembers how many hymns to the Virgin and to Christ were written in that period, works, often, of great elevation of feeling. "Mandeville," who has deluded many generations, is sternly excluded; that might be excused, but why should Richard Rolle and Wiclif be given mere chance allusions and not be discussed as influential forces in the history of English literature?

A pleasant element of defiance appears now and then when Professor Ker very mildly but most evidently declines to be a party to recent critical fiats regarding some medieval poems. His attitude towards the doctrine of plurality of authorship of *Piers Plowman* is one of surprise that such ideas can be. In his opinion, the author of *Piers Plowman* was unique, a true progressive whose literary work was fashioned and refashioned as his own life deepened. It is a satisfaction to find this scholar firmly on the side of those whose belief in one author cannot be overthrown by unsupported theory. Without hesitation Professor Ker informs us that in the *Pearl* "the dreamer is instructed as to the things of heaven by his daughter Marjory, the Pearl that he had lost." No student of human feeling can doubt that the *Pearl* is an elegy, so poignant is the expression of love and longing, but Professor Schofield is certainly right in contending that there is absolutely no warrant for associating the name *Marjory* with this piece of poetic symbolism.

On page 225, the critic comes out flatly with what he has hinted in earlier pages, an assertion about Gower. He says, "Gower should always be remembered along with Chaucer; *he is what Chaucer might have been without genius* [italics mine] and without his Italian reading, but with his critical tact, and much of his skill in verse and diction. The *Confessio Amantis* is monotonous, but it is not dull. Much of it at a time is wearisome, but as it is composed of a number of separate stories, it can be read in bits, and ought to be so read. Taken one at a time, the clear, bright little passages come out with a meaning and a charm that may be lost when the book is read too perseveringly."

This of Gower, this of the man who, to quote Lowell, "raised tediousness to a science," this of the man whose colorless, mechanical narratives drag along in couplets that are the despair of any one who tries to read them aloud! The one principle which Gower thoroughly understood was to allow no contrasts nor distinctions in his tales. His incidents, characters, and settings preserve a strict *incognito*. One of those "clear, bright little passages" comes to mind, from the tale of Daphne:—

"A dart of Led he caste and smot,
Which was al cold and nothing hot."

In the study of Chaucer's work, Professor Ker writes with a fine discrimination regarding the influences which produced the master poet, and although the chapter is rather disorderly and hurried, it gives one a sense of depth. The psychology of Chaucer is interpreted with a sure perception of cause and effect. The poet is not depicted as an artificial register of impressions, but as a vivid, thoughtful personality, always eager for experience. This, after all, is the true aim of literary criticism,—to show that literature is no accident, but a development of inner and of outer resources, a mysterious but not inexplicable impulse that forces men to reveal their imaginative perceptions. Precise and well-arranged details we can get in formal text-books, but few of these books give us what Professor Ker does,—a conception of the charm and beauty and rich significance to be found in the study of literary history.

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Les accents dans l'écriture française. Etude critique de leurs diverses fonctions dans le passé et dans le présent, par ALBERT SCHINZ. Paris, Champion, 1912. 81 pp.

This interesting contribution to the question of French spelling reform was first published in the *Revue de Philologie française*, and does

not aim to give a complete and detailed history of the use of accent-marks in French, such as is found in Dr. Hillmann's dissertation, *Geschichte der Accentsetzung im Französischen seit der Erfindung des Buchdrucks*, published at Halle three years ago, a work to which Mr. Schinz copiously refers. It rather proposes to bring out the salient features of the long and complex evolution of modern usage. Consequently Mr. Schinz frequently passes over the names of more famous grammarians in favor of obscurer ones who have happened to advocate a rule that, for good or evil, eventually prevailed.

Accent-marks, or rather signs that resembled them, were used in mediæval manuscripts as well as in the first printed Latin books. Mr. Schinz, however, reaches the conclusion that these signs had a very different function from their older one in Greek and their newer one in French. "There is no transition from the Greek to the French through the means of mediæval Latin except death, and later, in some points only . . . resurrection." The use of accent-marks in French is consequently a case of "spontaneous generation," brought about by existing conditions; if no accent-marks had ever existed before, the grammarians of the sixteenth century would undoubtedly have invented them.

It was the generalizing and democratizing of education fostered by the invention of the printing-press that generated the use of accent-marks, consequently their real history does not begin till the sixteenth century. This history (*e. g.*, the "common-sense" influence of the *Précieuses*, the nugatory attitude of the French Academy) points several morals which in the matter of linguistic progress and reform might well be taken to heart even today, and that not in France alone.

It is natural that the chief interest of the conclusions which Mr. Schinz reaches concerning the present use (or abuse) of accents should lie in their bearing on the question of spelling reform. But to fully endorse these conclusions it would be necessary to completely accept Mr. Schinz's premises, and it is not always possible to reconcile these with some of the prevalent